



DIRECT CARE WORKERS

Challenging Careers, Compassionate Hearts

What You Should Know About Direct Care Workers

More than 76,000 direct care workers provide essential long-term care services to older adults, younger adults with disabilities, and children with special needs across North Carolina. Families provide most direct care but often need help caring for loved ones with chronic or disabling conditions.

Direct care workers are at the heart of quality of care for those they serve. They are the frontline employees of our long-term care system.

What do direct care workers do?

- ♥ They help people with basic life tasks such as bathing, dressing, eating and getting in and out of bed. Some perform more advanced care tasks such as taking vital signs and catheter care.
- ♥ In some settings, they help with home management tasks such as shopping for groceries, preparing meals or teaching skills for independent living.
- ♥ Through their efforts, they help those in their care to maintain as much dignity, independence and quality of life as possible regardless of age or condition.

Who needs direct care?

- ♥ 60 percent of people beyond age 65 will need direct care at some point in their lives, either at home or in a group or institutional setting.
- ♥ Many younger adults and children also need direct care because of disability, mental health problems or chronic illnesses.

Who provides direct care?

- ♥ The U.S. Department of Labor broadly classifies direct care workers as nurse aides, orderlies and attendants; home health aides; and personal and home care aides.
- ♥ More than 76,000 direct care workers were employed in North Carolina in 2000.

Where is direct care provided?

- ♥ Direct care services may be provided in a person's home, part time or full time.
- ♥ Direct care services may also be provided in nursing homes, assisted living facilities, group homes, day activity centers, mental health facilities and other similar settings.

Who pays for direct care?

- ♥ It is estimated that North Carolina consumers and their families spent more than \$1.6 billion on direct care related services in 2000.
- ♥ Government programs in North Carolina spent an additional \$1.5 billion on direct care related services in 2000 to help state residents with limited resources.
- ♥ Employers pay indirectly when employees must take time off or even quit their jobs to care for family members.

What are direct care jobs like?

- ♥ Direct care jobs in North Carolina paid a median wage of \$7.86 an hour in 2000, typically with few employer-paid benefits.
- ♥ Direct care jobs give workers the deep satisfaction of knowing they make a real difference in someone's life every day.
- ♥ Though rewarding, the jobs can be stressful and physically and emotionally demanding. Annual turnover is more than 100 percent in some settings.

What is in the future for direct care workers?

- ♥ In 1998, it was projected that 30,850 new direct care workers would be needed by 2008.
- ♥ Since then, the state's 65+ population has passed 1 million. The number could grow to 2.2 million by 2030, and with it, the demand for direct care workers.
- ♥ North Carolina is implementing strategies to meet this demand, but it will take the continuing cooperation of our business, civic and educational communities to address the ongoing need.

Where can I learn more about direct care workers?

- ♥ Get on the Web at <http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/ltc/> (click on Workforce Issues)
- ♥ Call the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Public Affairs at 919-733-9190.

Funding to print this fact sheet is provided by a three-year Real Choice Systems Change grant made by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to address direct care workforce issues.